Special
Reserve

Pearson Report--The Amateur
Democrat in Champaign-Urbana

Keep at Desk 2-hr cop c

The Amateur Democrat in Champaign-Urbana

Alan Pearson
Pol. Sci. 426
5/23/67

PREFACE

This paper is based on the findings in James Q. Wilson's The Amateur Democrat. In this book Wilson attempts to define the new style political activist in todays political scene. His findings are based on interviews taken in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles in the summers of 1960 and 1961. My case study was made in the twin cities of Champaign and Urbana in the spring of 1967. The influences of city size and of the differences in the political climate of today in making a study of this type cannot be overlooked. However, in spite of these differences, many of Wilson's findings hold up. Some, as we shall see later, do not.

My questionnaire and cover letter are found in the Appendix. Fifty Biographic Data sheets and Interview Request forms were sent out. Of these, twenty-eight responded. Three of those who responded did not wish to be interviewed. Of the remainder, I was able to get twenty personal interviews. Seven of them were Champaign residents, the rest lived in Urbana. This sample was by no means a random one. The names of those I sent a questionnaire to were suggested to me by two leaders of the Urbana Democratic Party, and from a list of Precinct Committeemen. From this list of Committeemen an arbitrary selection was made based on the number of Democrats who had voted in their precinct in the last election. I was also able to interview an Urbana Alderman and an unsuccessful candidate for the United States House of

Representatives.

To those who responded to my questionnaire, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks. To those who were willing to give up some of their time to talk to me I am especially indebted. Without the cooperation of these fine people, this paper would not have been possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

PREFACE iii

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION 1

II. CHAMPAIGN AND URBANA: THE DEVELOPMENT OF POWER 6

III. THE AMATEUR DEMOCRAT IN CHAMPAIGN AND URBANA 14

IV. PROSPECT FOR THE FUTURE 31

BIBLIOGRAPHY 34

APPENDIX 35

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

James Q. Wilson in his book The Amateur Democrat sets out to define the new style of political activist in today's world. His findings are based on a study of Democratic Club politics in three cities: New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. The Democratic party was and still is the majority party in these cities. Because of these variables, some of Wilson's findings do not have application in other settings. He has given us an operational definition of the "amateur" which, as my case study of amateurism in Champaign and Urbana will show, holds up in a radically different situation. Wilson points out that an amateur does not have to be a Democrat. He does not have to be a liberal, either. What defines an amateur is not his party or his political philosophy, but his motivation and his perception of his role in the political arena. The purpose of this chapter is to present Wilson's description of the amateur as he found him.[1] Later chapters will describe the amateur as he is in Champaign and Urbana, where he is in a minority party, and where he found it advisable to abandon the Club motif for a statutory, formal party organization.

Wilson describes the motives of the amateur as follows:

> An amateur is one who finds politics intrinsically interesting, because it expresses a conception of the public interest. The amateur politician sees the political world

> more in terms of ideas and principles than in terms of persons. Politics is the determination of public policy, and public policy ought to be set deliberately rather than as the accidental by-product of a struggle for personal and party advantage. Issues ought to be settled on their merits...If the arena in which the amateur acts is the city and the question at hand a limited one, his tendency is to endow the issue with generality--either making it a national issue or by finding in it wider implications. The amateur takes the outcome of politics--the determination of policies and the choice of officials--seriously, in the sense that he feels a direct concern for what he thinks are the ends these policies serve and the qualities these officials possess.[2]

The amateur is motivated by an idealistic desire to see good government developed and good policies put into effect. His satisfactions come from his feeling of participation in the political scene. The professional, on the other hand, is motivated for entirely different reasons. His concern is power--personal power. Issues and candidates are viewed as means to this end, whereas for the amateur, they are the ends of his actions. Candidates are recruited and supported by the amateur primarily for their committment to the issues which the amateur believes in. The good society is a fortunate by-product of the professional's actions, not the goal of them.

The professional views his position as a maintaining one. Thus, he will avoid policies and candidates which will not be agreeable to the largest number of people. His reward is control or power, or the joy of the game. He will not wish to jeopardize his position by advocating policies which may alienate people. Since he has no philosophical stake in the outcome of an election, losses are considered part of the game.

As such they are something he can live with. The amateur, because each battle is considered a fight for a cause, views losses as defeats and wins as great victories.

An integral part of the amateurs outlook is his devotion to the democratic process. As such his movement is a follower movement. Policies and decisions reached by his organization are determined by the democratic process. Members advance in the organization by their willingness to work for it. He will be led, but only to the degree that his leader exhibits the same ideals as he is commited to. It is possible for a "professional" to be a leader of an amateur movement, since this role usually goes to the one who is most willing to perform the function of a leader. The professional in this case must be quite careful in his dealings with his followers, but as long as he is able to tread this line he will not be challenged. If the amateur detects signs that his leader is taking on the trappings of the professional he will remove him. As we shall see later, this may not necessarily be the case.

Amateur organizations are bound together by ideology more than by personal ties. The professional has his organization based on personal ties, either by friendship or by loyalty instilled by patronage. The amateur works in his district because of the issues he wishes to promote. The professional works because he has a favor to repay to a local leader, or likes to look important to his neighbors, or for the simple reason that he enjoys meeting people. The amateur may perform his duties for many

of the same reasons, but this is not the dominant motivation for his activities. This led Wilson to discuss the distinction between the amateur and the professional in terms of a "local" and a "cosmopolitan."[3]

> A local, from whose ranks most professional politicians are drawn, is a person who is preoccupied with the local community to the exclusion of affairs outside his community. He is "parochial," and has lived in his community for many years, knows many people and is anxious to know more, and defines power in terms of interpersonal influence based on a network of friendships. He joins organizations which are local in order to avail himself of contacts and in order to associate himself with the broadest, most widely accepted symbols of community integration. A cosmopolitan, on the other hand, is a person with minimal ties to the locality but a strong attachment to "the Great Society" of national and international problems, ideas, movements, fashions, and culture. He is often a recent arrival to the community and, if it is small, anxious to move on to large cities which are themselves "cosmopolitan." He is selective in his friendships, seeks out other cosmopolitans, joins organizations which have a professional and civic flavor, and endeavors to be influential through the display of his expertise and special skills. His attachment is to symbols which are not widely shared but esoteric and which are, thus, often divisive rather than integrating for the community as a whole.[4]

Wilson's amateurs had a strong intellectual orientation. Primarily, they were what Wilson called "intellectual consumers." They were teachers, lawyers, journalists, etc. They were concerned with disseminating the products of intellectual activity rather than producers of it. Those few "intellectual producers" -- university professors who were active were the younger men in their profession. Wilson feels that they were active because it provided a substitute for research activities. Wilson does not really have an explanation for the lack of

"intellectual producers" in amateur politics, although the cities he studied were centers for many universities and colleges. Perhaps the reason is that scholars, at least those in the social sciences, are trained to be observers of society and not active participants in it.

While there were differences in the make up of the three city amateur club organizations, they did tend to support Wilson's description of the cosmopolitan. The following is an oversimplified description of the "average characteristics" of Wilson's amateur. He is generally young -- under forty. He comes from a middle class background. He is usually a well educated professional (if he is a leader of a club he is likely to be a lawyer). There are many women active in the clubs. This is very much in keeping with the egalitarian ideals of the amateur. There is a large number of Jews in the clubs, but relatively few Catholics. The amateur is usually single, but if he is married, he is usually newly married and childless. Many amateurs join the club to make social acquaintances in a strange community. Thus, it would appear that the amateur is usually just starting out in his chosen career and finds political activity an interesting avocation. He stays on only until he is ready to make a greater committment to his career and to his role as a family man.

CHAPTER II

CHAMPAIGN AND URBANA: THE DEVELOPMENT OF POWER

The amateur movement in Champaign-Urbana traces its history back to the Stevenson campaign of 1952. It was a volunteer movement which called itself Citizens for Stevenson. Its members were University of Illinois faculty and students who were impressed by Stevenson's liberal-intellectual position. They received the support and encouragement of the County Chairman -- Leo Pfeffer. The local Democratic party at that time was very ineffectual, and Pfeffer welcomed the support of this volunteer movement. They in turn were happy to help the party. As it later turned out there would be a falling out which has not been resolved to this day.

Pfeffer, a farmer and a Catholic who does not live in either Champaign or Urbana, held his organization together primarily by the patronage he was able to get and direct from the state Democratic party. He was also the Democratic State Representative from this area. Illinois, with its cumulative voting system and minority representation in the State House of Representatives thus guaranteed that at least one Democrat would be elected from this predominantly Republican area.

Pfeffer, it seemed, was content with the arrangement as it was. It also appeared to some of the amateurs that he had a working arrangement with the local city Republicans so as not to provide any challenge to

them. He did carry out some of the social aspects of the party, and was able to get state candidates to the party's affairs. He was either indifferent or unable to recruit quality candidates for office, particularly local offices. This was a source of frustration not only to the amateurs, but also to some of the older members of the party.

The Democratic party in Champaign-Urbana was in pretty grim shape. City Council elections in Champaign are on a non-partisan biennial basis. Urbana, on the other hand elects its fourteen city aldermen (one half of them every two years) on the off years. These races, including the mayor's, are on a partisan basis. In 1952, the Democrats had one alderman on the Urbana City Council.

The formal structure of the Democratic party in both cities is on the basis of elected precinct committeemen elected in the spring primaries. In many areas there was no Democratic precinct committeeman at all! Those precincts which did have a committeeman, usually had an apathetic one.

These committeemen didn't work for three reasons. First, they were usually not part of the city life. Their ties were in the rural part of the county and to Leo Pfeffer. Thus, they had little concern for the local affairs of the party and its role in the cities. Second, they held their jobs via patronage which came to them from Pfeffer and to a degree from the Republican city organizations. They were not eager to upset this balance. Third, they were discouraged by the dim prospect of a

successful Democratic party in the cities, and the failure of past Democratic candidates. This was a one party area, and that party was Republican.

The amateurs viewed this situation with alarm. They were not as yet aware of the causes of this situation, only that it was a problem to be remedied. In 1953, for the first time they ran a full slate of candidates for the Urbana city council. It was not successful, but they viewed it as a start. There was no challenge to Pfeffer's control. The amateurs were more concerned with developing a two party system for its good government effects, than with establishing a Democratic party which reflected their viewpoint. Thus, they were quite willing to work with Pfeffer. In a way he was their hero. He was viewed as the man who kept the Democrats from disappearing altogether. He in turn welcomed their activities, as long as they offered no resistance to his control. The amateurs were willing workers who did not cost him anything.

The amateurs continued to work in volunteer organizations. There was a Citizens for Douglas organization in 1954, as well as continued activity in the Urbana City elections. Because of the partisan nature of Urbana's elections, the bulk of the amateurs activities was centered there. It was there too, that the majority of the membership of the amateur movement lived. However, from 1955 to 1960, except for a few sporadic activities in pockets of Democratic strength, the

movement reached an impass. (These areas were usually married students and young faculty living complexes located near the University.) In fact, the movement almost died out completely. Then it received the spark it needed.

The University of Illinois Young Democrats at that time was headed by Constantine Pelekoudas. Pelekoudas and his wife, Lois, turned out to be the mobilizers of the amateurs in Champaign-Urbana. Almost single handedly he got a man elected to the Urbana City Council in 1959, by the handsome margin of four votes. He galvanized the movement, and in 1960, he and others formed a club called The Champaign County Democratic Club. This later changed its name to the Reform Democrats.

Up until this time there had been no organization of any kind. The amateurs would come toegether for a campaign and then would disband, starting the process over again for each campaign. The club took over the responsibility for the Urbana City Council elections. They also started working to get their own men elected where there were no Democratic precinct committeemen as well as challenging the Pfeffer men who were precinct committeemen.

In 1960 the Reform Democrats were able to elect ten of their men precinct committeemen. These men were professors or in other ways associated with the University. Pfeffer began to sense trouble. In an attempt to forestall a fight Pfeffer made Pelekoudas a vice-chairman in the county organization. This tactic failed to work. The Reform Democrats

continued to develop their strength in the precincts in Champaign and Urbana. In 1962, Pelekoudas decided to openly challenge Pfeffer for the Chairmanship of Champaign County in the county convention. This attempt was not well conceived or planned out and as a result it lost. The amateurs continued to work with Pfeffer for a while after that, but it was a nervous truce.

In May of 1962, Pelekoudas decided that the clubs had to go. The clubs (there was one in Urbana and in Champaign) were proving to be impotent as official challenges to Pfeffer and his organization. Therefore two Township organizations were established. The cities are contiguous with the townships so there was no real logistics problem. The Town of the City of Champaign is located in City of Champaign Township, and the City of Urbana is, curiously, located in Cunningham Township. The new organizations now had a legally recognized party base. Pfeffer refused to recognize these organizations, and specifically disavowed their existence as legitimate party organizations.

The movement up until this time had been a unified one. Everyone had a personal loyalty to Pelekoudas which overcame the decisive forces within the organization. As in many situations where two towns exist side by side a rivalry develops between them. This is true in Champaign-Urbana. This rivalry existed in the Democratic organization as well. Unfortunately, Pelekoudas, who was a graduate student in economics, moved away. Without him to hold the organization together it

split into the two separate township organizations.

There are other reasons for this split in the organization than the simple one of town rivalry. First, the local politics are different. The nonpartisan Champaign elections are not conducive to the development of party politics at a local level. The lowest level of partisan elections is for the Township Board of Supervisors. The Champaign amateurs did attempt to make a contest out of that election, but elections of this type seldom attract much voter interest or enthusiasm. Second, each city organization feels that it knows its own city problems best and resents outside interference in them. Third, The Champaign Democratic Party is extremely weak, whereas the Urbana one is strong. The Champaign Democrat's pride would not let them take the role of a weak sister in a unified organization. Fourth, the Champaign Democrats recognize the rivalry of the towns and feel that the presence of Urbana people working in Champaign would be a detriment rather than an aid. Finally, the man who became the leader of the Urbana Democratic organization is not popular with the Champaign organization. More on this problem later.

It should be noted that the amateurs now had two enemies. The first was the Republicans. They are conservative, and because of their one party dominance allowed local city government to decay. Here were amateur issues to be fought for. The second enemy for the amateur was and still is Leo Pfeffer. Pfeffer is the antithesis of the amateur's ideas of the party and it's leader's role. The amateurs see Pfeffer as a

conservative, an anti-intellectual, and firmly believe that he retains his position by patronage and personal loyalty. He is, in short, a "professional." Pfeffer had to go.

In 1964, the amateurs decided to openly challenge Pfeffer for County Chairman. In the County Convention every precinct committeeman is entitled to vote the total number of Democratic voters in his precinct as determined by the primary elections. The amateurs had been steadily developing a strong precinct committeeman base by running men in those precincts which had no Democratic committeeman, and by beating the incumbent Pfeffer committeeman. The amateurs knew that they were short of the necessary votes to defeat Pfeffer, but hoped to get a bandwagon effect going since their committeeman would be called early. There were enough swing committeemen to accomplish their goal, but a tactical error on the part of one of the leaders of the amateurs caused them to lose this fight.

Pfeffer holds his organization together primarily from the patronage he is able to get from the state Democratic party. As long as he was able to be both County Chairman and State Representative he had complete control over it. Pfeffer was able to insure the fact that he would be the Democratic State Representative by making sure that only one Democrat -- himself -- was nominated. In 1966, Governor Kerner decided that from now on the Democrats would put up at least two candidates for the office of State Representative. If this was not done, he

would cut off the patronage.

Here was the opportunity the amateurs were waiting for. Their immediate problem was in deciding who to put up as their candidate. The amateurs decided to support a man from outside Champaign County. He was Paul Stone. There was no primary battle, since officially the party takes no stand in primaries. It was also decided that this would not be a wise strategy. There would be two Democratic candidates anyway, so the amateurs decided not to waste their energy in a useless primary fight. The Republicans watched with delight as the two Democrats ran, not against them, but against themselves. Paul Stone won.

Leo Pfeffer is still the County Chairman, but his source of state patronage has been limited. State party leaders are holding off making any major commitment to either faction until the 1968 election. The amateurs are convinced that Pfeffer will try to come back, and if he does, they feel that they will be able to beat him again. This would prove their superiority in state elections, and force the state Democrats to come to them. In the meantime they are continuing to develop a viable local party for two reasons. First, to challenge the Republicans and thereby develop better local government. Second, to gain enough strength in the county to oust Pfeffer in the County Convention. They think they can do it either in 1968, or by 1970.

CHAPTER III

THE AMATEUR DEMOCRAT IN CHAMPAIGN AND URBANA

There are certain fundamental differences between the two township Democratic organizations. These differences are explainable primarily on the basis of their leaders and the philosophies of leadership which they adhere to. Formally, both organizations are legal parties. By statute decisions of the party are made by the committeeman of the township. The committeemen vote according to the number of democrats in their precinct as determined by the primary. This, theoretically, is a stimulus for greater activity in the precinct, since the Democratic turnout determines the influence an individual committeeman will have on the decisions of the party.

For obvious reasons this is not in keeping with the democratic ideals of the amateur. The Champaign organization follows the practice of one man-one vote in reaching its decisions. They also allow any interested Democrat to come to their meetings and contribute to the development of the party's issues and policies. Thus, even noncommitteemen can vote in the Champaign meetings. When asked to clarify what was meant by an interested Democrat, the reply was, "If someone is interested enough to come to the meetings, and to work for the party, he is eligible to take part in making the decisions."

The feeling was that it would not be possible for anyone to simply

come in and take over a meeting. One would have to prove his mettle before any of the other members of the party would pay much attention to what he had to say. This procedure, however, has the advantage of allowing for participation by people who, for various reasons, are not committeemen. The only legal restriction on this democratic process is that the chairman of the organization must be a committeeman. This proved to be a problem when the original chairman moved to Urbana. She could no longer legally run the Champaign organization. The present chairman of the organization received this post through elimination, for various reasons, of other more interested members. He has not proven to be a chairman of the quality of his predecessor.

The Urbana situation, on the other hand, is quite different. Informally, they follow the same democratic procedures as does the Champaign organization. However, where the Champaign organization has overlooked the legal voting restrictions in all situations which do not require official sanctions, the Urbana organization also falls back on to formal voting on decisions in cases of emergency. Unfortunately, there always seems to be an emergency.

No organization is ever run on a completely democratic basis. There always has to be a leader, someone to coordinate activities and provide direction for the rank-and-file. In amateur organizations the leader must be blessed with these virtues plus the additional one of being a skilled handler of men. He must give them the impression that it really

is their organization and that he is carrying out their desires. He must be able to convince them that his ideas are actually theirs. He must constantly congratulate them for any amount of work, regardless of the amount or importance of it. He has to be a skilled organizer and coordinator of activities. He must be willing to devote a tremendous amount of time to the organization. He must do all these things, and still be modest about his contributions to the organization. In short, he has to be a professional, with an amateur's motivation and he must be overtly willing to accept amateurs rewards.

The chairman of the Champaign organization evidently was able to carry this off. The chairman of the Urbana organization makes no attempt to. His philosophy is that a leader should lead.

> That's the trouble with these people, they all come into this thing thinking that they know what's best and wind up screwing up the works. They have to realize that any organization to be successful must be lead by one man, and not by the whole bunch of them who don't really know what's going on.

To a degree he is right, but this attitude causes considerable unhappiness within his own organization. The philosophy is completely alien to the amateurs philosophy of a follower led organization. This is perhaps the greatest reason why Champaign does not want to formally unite with Urbana. They do not want to be under this man's control.

One of the more extreme reactions to this man's leadership is found in an open letter dated January 12, 1967, written to one of the members of the Urbana organization and distributed to all the members

of the organization.

> What concerns me more is the picture revealed at Sunday's meeting of the unfortunate situation of the Urbana Democratic Central Committee. If high school civics students want to see political bossism in action, they need not scan the pages of the New York Times for the exploits of Mr. Sharkey. They can see it in its full flowering right here in Central Illinois, at any UDCC meeting. Not the subtle, alert nudging, moving always in the direction of the party mainstream, which is the tradition of both party traditions in the United States: but a blatant, savage misuse of office that reminds one of the worst excesses of political dictatorship.

Others, less extreme in their opinion, feel that the chairman does not allow them to have much say in the decisions of the organization. They feel that he has made some tactical errors that shouldn't have been made, and wouldn't have been if they were able to have greater control over the strategy development and execution of the organization. They also feel that he doesn't really care what they think, since he will do what he thinks is right regardless of the fact that the rest of the organization may have decided to do something else. They believe that he tends to over-estimate his contribution, which they admit is considerable, to the organization. In short, to them he acts like a "professional" leader, not an "amateur" leader.

However, the very nature of an amateur movement is that people rise and become leaders simply on the basis of their willingness to voluntarily devote a great deal of time and energy to do it. This man is willing to do just that. He has a tremendous amount of drive and energy

which he is willing to channel into the organization and its goals. Even as chairman of the organization he canvasses the entire city looking for Democrats and urging them to vote in elections and to become active in the party. He also has a personal magnetism which seems to overpower people, particularly women.

In November 1966, the chairman of the Urbana organization resigned because of a dispute over one of his decisions. The other amateurs assumed that he meant it. At the next meeting a motion was made to rescind all resignations. The acting chairman refused this motion, primarily for the reason that it had been publicly (in the newspapers) announced that the resignations had taken place. The ex-chairman was renominated and won. The vote followed the legal procedure of each committeeman voting the number of Democrats in his precinct. The ex-chairman had been challenged in his home precinct in the previous primary, which he won. As a result of this contest 184 Democrats had voted in that primary. This voting strength is approximately three times the number that any other precinct committeeman has. This fact, plus the loyalty of some of the other committeemen to this man was enough to reinstate him as chairman.

To put some restraints on the activities of their chairman, the Urbana Democrats decided to increase the number of the executive committee, which originally numbered five, to twelve. The seven additional members are the ward chairmen, elected by the precinct committeemen

in the ward. Some of the ward chairmen are also members of the old executive committee, so the complete executive committee does not number twelve. This solution has had a tempering effect on the chairman, at least this is what some of the amateurs believe. However, whenever there is any disagreement between the chairman and other members of the organization it is resolved by the formal method of only committeemen voting, and not by the pure democratic method of one man-one vote.

The members of the Champaign and Urbana Democratic parties are amateurs, not only in Wilson's sense of the word, but in other ways as well. To a great degree they fit his definition and description. In some noticeable ways they do not. They are also amateurs in the approach to the game of politics. To a great degree they are naive. They have an implicit faith in anyone who overtly adheres to their ideals and philosophy. They are profoundly disappointed when he does not act the way they think he should. They honestly believed that the chairman of the Urbana organization meant it when he resigned; thus, they were unprepared when he decided to regain his old job. They believe that the means to achieve their idealistic, altruistic goals should also be altruistic and idealistic. They also realize that this work takes tremendous devotion and sacrifice of time and energy. They have no reward for this sacrifice except gratitude. Because the chairman of the Urbana organization makes a greater sacrifice than anyone else, he retains the

chairmanship and their grudging support.

The responses (twenty-eight out of fifty) to my Biographic Data questionnaire reveal the following characteristics about the "Amateur Democrat" as they are in Champaign-Urbana. Their average age is about forty-one. The ages running between twenty-five and sixty-three. The majority of them are male. Almost all of them are married. Those who are married have been, on the average, for fifteen years. The range here runs from one year to thirty. All but one of the married amateurs have children, usually between two and three. All of them have completed high school, the majority are through college and of those many have advanced degrees or are in the process of getting them. Many of them were affiliated with the University. The chairmen of both organizations is a University professor. This dominance of the University in both organizations is also cause for strife in the organizations.

Religiously they differ greatly from the Wilson study. There were no Jews in the responses I received. Seventeen indicated that they are Protestant (six are Unitarian), six are Catholic, and five stated that they had no preference. On the average they have lived in this area for sixteen years and twenty-one stated that they planned to stay indefinitely. Their political philosophy ranged from moderate to very strong liberal. They have been politically active on the average for six years. There are no lawyers on this movement, although there are law professors. Thus, in some respects they resemble their counterparts

in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, but in others they differ considerably.

By more than anything else, an amateur is defined by the motivation which led him into politics, and the reason's the amateurs get involved in politics is as varied as they are. Some got involved because they wanted to see a viable two party system in the county and city. Others didn't like the way Pfeffer was running the Democratic party. Most believe that the conservative Republican dominance on the city council's has kept both cities from developing to their fullest potential. In short they are very much the altruistic, idealistic amateur that Wilson defines.

While an amateur may be defined by his motivation for being in politics, this motivation is usually not enough to get him actively involved. Many people have the ideals of the amateur, but still are not in politics. When asked why they became active in politics the responses fell into these general categories. Some were attracted by an individual candidate and decided to stay on in the organization after that particular campaign was over. Some became disgusted with the lack of opposition to the dominant conservative Republican party. Others were active in other liberal causes and discovered that the local Democrats were interested in the same things and were attempting to use politics to achieve them. A few came from a family background of political activity and were carrying on the tradition. Some viewed it as a way to meet and be active

with people they might not ordinarily meet. Some became active because a friend asked them to help. Perhaps the main underlying reason they got involved was summed up by one of them as follows:

> I think we get interested because there is something lacking in our careers. They don't provide enough challenge for us, or they aren't interesting enough, or both. Maybe we'd just like to do something else for a while. What ever it is, politics gives to us the something that is lacking elsewhere in our lives.

They stay interested because they feel they are doing something important. They feel that they are developing a liberal Democratic alternative to the one party conservative Republican dominance in the area. They like the feeling that they have had a hand in making the decisions which govern their lives. They like being close to candidates and to political power. They enjoy the game of politics, the strategies, the manuevering, the fight. They enjoy the social life which the party offers them. They see some successes and this encourages them to stay on.

Their reward for their work are very much the same as the reasons they stay interested in politics. They are all intangible since they get no patronage from Pfeffer. The primary reward is meeting people. They enjoy ringing doorbells and doing the organizational jobs which must be done. Right now the work is fun and they are willing to accept the intangible rewards which amateur politics offers them. However, after a while the fun of doing the job simply for the fun of it wears off. The job then becomes tedious work, and once this happens

the amateur loses interest. This is the greatest problem of amateur politics, and one which the leaders recognize. This is the major reason, I believe, for the continual turnover in amateur politics; psychic rewards are not enough to keep people continually active in any organization.

While some of them discussed such matters as the Viet Nam war and civil rights, the majority of them are concerned with issues which are local in character. They want to develop a viable Democratic party to challenge the Republican dominance in both cities. They want to replace Leo Pfeffer as Democratic County Chairman. They want the local government to be more responsive to the needs of the poor. They want to improve local race relations. They want the cities to have better planning and improved zoning laws. They want their streets improved and better lighted. They want better schools. They want an improved revenue article for state financing. However, when asked which public policy questions are more important to them -- local or national-international the overwhelming response was national-international.

This apparent contradiction is explainable in two ways, both of which are related to the size of Champaign-Urbana. First the national issues of civil rights and poverty are more evident in a small city than they are in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. Champaign-Urbana has certainly not escaped the problems which plague these cities, but here they are closer to the citizen. One has to travel quite a distance from his middle-class home in these cities to see ghettos and slums.

You can drive through Champaign-Urbana in a half an hour. These problems don't seem so remote in Champaign-Urbana. They are, indeed, right next door.

The second reason also related to city size -- efficacy. As one amateur put it:

> Sure the war and civil rights and all the other national issues bother me. But I can't do anything about those. Here I can see the results of my activities. Hopefully, by getting good local candidates we can work our way up to the national level.

The issues the amateur discusses first are those which he feels he can have the most effect on. They are also the ones which he feels most acutely. However, as an idealist he feels deeply about national concerns as well. The national problems seem to dwarf the local problems he faces. They are naturally more important to him, they may decide the fate of the world, but he feels frustrated when he attempts to do anything about them. The reward of seeing a local problem improved is an additional factor which keeps the amateur active.

This brings us back to Wilson's distinction between the local and the cosmopolitan. Wilson's amateur was a cosmopolitan. The amateur as he exists in Champaign-Urbana does not fit this ideal type. He is more closely related to Wilson's definition of a cosmopolitan, but he has many features in common with the local also. He has very likely lived here all his life, or at least a great deal of it. He has little prospect of leaving, except if he is a graduate student or a young faculty member.

His interests include both national-international and local issues. His idealism and altruistic philosophy is not limited to one of these areas to the exclusion of the other. He is gregarious, he likes to meet all types of people, not just amateurs like himself. However, because he is bound by his ideals, it makes it difficult for him to accept or work well with people who do not share his philosophies. He is neither a cosmopolitan nor a local; he is a "cosmocal."

Rank-and-file members are recruited in one of two ways. The first method is to try and coax people who have come into the party for a specific campaign, usually because of the appeal of a specific candidate, to stay on and work in other campaigns. Many people work in a particular campaign and then never do anything again. Those who stay on are given some minor jobs, and then gradually worked into the party.

The second method is to go out and actively recruit them. Committeemen when they canvas the neighborhood not only look for people to vote democratic, but to become workers. Committeemen are constantly on the look out for anyone who expresses an interest and they urge them to become active. Their recruiting method is fairly uniform. The typical method was related to me as follows:

> When I find someone who is a Democrat I find out what his interests are. Usually they have some gripe or complaint. I then tell them that the Democrats are trying to correct the situation, but that we need help.
>
> If someone agrees to help I give him a simple job at first. Nothing too hard and nothing too time consuming.

> I try to work him in gradually. After a while they get enthusiastic; they get hooked on the game just like the rest of us.

The rank-and-file are usually affiliated with the University in some manner. This is understandable since the originators of the movement were also associated with the University. They recruited their friends and acquaintances who likewise were University people. This has caused some trouble. University towns usually have a town-gown split. Champaign-Urbana is no different. Some of the non-university members feel that there are too many university people and not enough town people in the organization. They feel that a more concerted effort should be made to broaden the base of the party. Others feel (including some of the university respondents) that the liberal ideas of the organization, as reflected by the leadership of both organizations, keeps some of the more moderate local democrats from joining the amateur movement. The feeling is that when Pfeffer is defeated as County Chairman, the old Pfeffer people must be brought back into the party, and a University man will not be able to do this.

One of the amateurs remarked to me that their organization has a great deal of trouble getting anything going in the negro sections. There is some work being done there -- a negro on the Urbana city council and a committeeman, but very little else. He couldn't understand why they should be having so much trouble.

This problem, I believe, stems from the very nature of the amateur

movement. The amateur movement is essentially a middle class movement. The amateur is not active in politics for personal advancement or gain. The professional politician sees politics as a means for gain and advancement. This is reflected in the history of the immigrant in politics. Politics to the Irish, or the Italian used to mean the way to acceptance and power. To the negro today it means the same thing. The negro views politics from the point of view of the professional. These divergent points of view are incompatible in an amateur organization.

The amateurs have no problem over endorsement of candidates. As I pointed out earlier, they only had a choice once when they supported Paul Stone over Leo Pfeffer in the State Representative race. Because they are an official party they can take no open stand in primaries, and they rarely support Republicans. They attempt to find articulate, attractive (physically as well as philosophically) candidates and attempt to persuade them to run. However, because of the slim prospect of winning in races against the Republican majority, they have a hard time finding candidates who are willing to run.

For the above reasons, the organization can not take a very dominant role in the selection of the issues in a campaign. They may select an issues committee, but it is up to the individual candidate to select the issues he wants to run on. The amateurs give him all the support they can. Thus, as one amateur said:

> We try to sell an image. We try to tie the candidate and the issues together in the minds of the voter. For some, they may be voting for the candidate; for others, they are voting for the issue. In either case we get the vote.

The problem of patronage is a complex one to the amateur. Some are philosophically opposed to it; they see no good in it at all. Others view it as the tool that Pfeffer uses to keep his organization together, and are opposed to it for that reason. Some recognize it as a necessary evil, but would not want to see it extended. Others, also opposed to it, would like to see their organization have some of it to use. They see it as the cement which holds a political party together. Thus, in principle the amateur is opposed to patronage, but realistically they see some value in it, and feel that its constructive use could be made to strengthen their party position. There is no real unanimity on this issue, but since they haven't any to dispense it remains an academic problem. If they replace Pfeffer with one of their own, there may be an internal fight over this issue.

Their minority position enables them to handle losses better than would be expected. They don't really expect to win. Some of the rank-and-file do leave because of losses, but the majority are elated when they win, and take satisfaction in losses at the increased turnout of the Democratic vote. As one of them said:

> What do we do when we lose? We have a victory celebration. Somebody must have won somewhere. We tell ourselves; wait 'til next time. We'll get them then. Losses don't really bother us that much, it's the shock of winning that's hard to take.

Keeping the organization together when there is no campaign in progress is more difficult in Champaign than it is in Urbana. Because of the partisan nature of the campaigns and the fact that Urbana has an election every year, Urbana is usually embroiled in some campaign or other. Social events, such as fish frys, beef barbecues, dances, rallies, and cocktail parties are the main devices used to keep the rank-and-file members interested and the leaders of the organizations active. Sometimes these events will feature a candidate who addresses the meeting and meets the workers. Some of these events are combined events (particularly those featuring candidates) with both the Champaign and Urbana organizations participating.

Both organizations have meetings, usually monthly, with the entire membership eligible to attend. They also distribute newsletters on a regular basis. The leaders of both organizations attempt to keep in contact with as many members of the organization as possible. But in spite of these activities, it is still a problem keeping the organization going and keeping the rank-and-file interested.

The amateur distinguishes himself from the "professional" politician in terms of the amount of time he is able to devote to politics. A professional is not intrinsically evil to the amateur. He is bad if he misuses his power for personal gain and overlooks the needs of the people and the principles of good government. The professional is able to devote all his time to politics. The amateur, because of his committment to his

career, can only be a part time politician. They realize that politics is a full time activity, and thus, they give their grudging respect to him. The amateur regrets this situation, but he recognizes it for what it is.

The amateurs have at least two main goals. The first is in offering a challenge to the Republican majority and ending their one party dominance. The second is to develop a broad-based liberal (or at least moderate) Democratic party without Leo Pfeffer as the head of it. To these ends the means is the same -- develop a strong organization by getting good candidates to run and by working hard in the precincts. These people may be called amateurs on the basis of their motivation, but certainly not in their realization of how to achieve their goals.

CHAPTER IV

PROSPECT FOR THE FUTURE

As they stand now the amateurs are faced with numerous internal problems. Their goals and dedication to their ideals hold them together. The irony is that if they succeed in one of them, then their internal tensions may easily erupt into the open and tear them apart. The most likely thing to cause this will be the replacement of Leo Pfeffer as County Chairman with one of their own people. The major problem is that the amateurs have no one to replace him with.

The position of County Chairman is one which required a great deal of time and energy if the Democratic party is going to be developed in this area. This post cannot go to someone as an honor for his work; it must be filled by a man who is willing to dedicate to it the time it requires. The amateurs realize this and herein lies the problem.

The chairman of the Urbana organization has demonstrated that he is willing to devote the time and energy that the post of County Chairman requires. He certainly appears to want it. However, the very reasons that he is unpopular as leader of the Urbana organization would make it impossible for him to be acceptable as County Chairman. As one man put it:

> The moment he is installed as County Chairman there will be a movement to get him out. We recognize the work he had done for the party and the organization, but he is just

> not acceptable as County Chairman. We don't want him to leave the party, but his being County Chairman is just not acceptable.

The man is "just not acceptable" for other reasons than his philosophy of leadership. The local Democratic party is split along many lines. The first is the rivalry between the two towns. Champaign does not want to be a weak sister to Urbana. They feel they would be if the leader of the Urbana organization became County Chairman. Second, the town-gown split is also prevalent. The leader of the Urbana organization is a University of Illinois Professor, and as I pointed out earlier, some of the local town people do not like the fact that the organization is so heavily peopled by university people.

Third, there is disagreement over the liberal philosophy which the university people bring to the party. Some of the amateurs feel that the party takes too liberal a stand in this moderate, conservative area. They feel that the party should moderate its position more. The leader of the Urbana organization is a strong liberal. Fourth, some of the amateurs feel that a man must be found to replace Pfeffer who can bring back into the party the Pfeffer Democrats who might leave if Pfeffer is removed. They don't believe that the chairman of the Urbana organization can do this.

Thus, it would seem that the man to replace Leo Pfeffer should be a moderate, live on the boundary line of the two towns, not be affiliated with the University, and be able to be acceptable to all Democrats. It is

assumed that he will devote every spare minute of his time as well as some minutes which aren't spare to the party. As it stands now this man has not appeared. The chairman of the Urbana organization is willing to devote the time the office requires, and the amateurs recognize his contributions to the party. They ask themselves, "Can we deny this post to this man?" They tell themselves that they have to.

This is the problem of amateur politics. Their philosophy gets in the way of their goals. Their arguments devolve into arguments over philosophy of governing and motivation. They are willing to sacrifice what they have worked so hard for in the name of their principles. They claim they seek to meet all types of people, but the only ones acceptable to them are those who share their ideals. They must make a choice as to what they want to do. Whatever they decide to do, the results of their decision will have tremendous consequences on the political structure of Champaign and Urbana for many years to come.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wilson, James Q., The Amateur Democrat, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966.

APPENDIX

408 E. Springfield
Champaign, Ill.
Home phone 356-0986
Office phone 333-2781

Dear

I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Political Science at the University of Illinois. One of my areas of special interest is in political parties--their organization, activities, policies, and most important, the people who compose them. Of late, there has been interest among political scientists in the appearance of new types of political activists. It has come to my attention that you might be regarded as an activist of this type.

As part of my graduate work, I am enrolled in a seminar in political parties. One of the course requirements is a research paper, and I have chosen to write about the new style of political party activist within the Democratic party in the Champaign-Urbana area. Enclosed you will find a Biographic Data questionnaire and an Interview Request sheet. Realizing that your time is limited, I would at least hope that you can complete the Data sheet. A stamped self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience. No information will be directly attributed to any individual when the paper is completed.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Alan Pearson

Biographical Data

1. How old are you? _____

2. Sex (circle one) Male Female

3. Present marital status (circle one) Married Single

3a. If married, for how long have you been married? _____

3b. If married, how many children do you have? _____

4. What was your highest level of formal education? _____

_____

5. If you have attended college, or if you are now attending college or graduate school, what was (is) your major? _____

6. What is your religion? _____

7. When you were growing up what was the political preference of your father? (Check one)

_____ Republican _____ Independent

_____ Democrat _____ Other (Specify:_____)

8. When you were growing up what was the political preference of your mother? (Check one)

_____ Republican _____ Independent

_____ Democrat _____ Other (Specify:_____)

9. In general, what is the political preference of your friends?

_____ Republican _____ Independent

_____ Democrat _____ Other (Specify:_____)

10. In general, what is the political preference of your co-workers?

_____ Republican _____ Independent

_____ Democrat _____ Other (Specify:_____)

11. Does anyone in your household belong to a labor union?

_____ No

_____ Yes (If "Yes" specify whom. _____)

12. What is your occupation? _____

13. What is your party office? _____

14. On the continuum below indicate your political philosophy. A check immediately next to the liberal end of the scale would mean that you consider yourself to be a very strong liberal; a check in the middle of the scale would indicate that you think of yourself as a moderate, etc.

Liberal___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: Conservative

/

Moderate

15. How long have you lived in this area? _____

16. How long do you plan to stay in this area? _____

17. How long have you been politically active in this area?

_____

18. What, if any, other organizations (political, fraternal, religious, etc.) do you belong to?

_____

_____

Interview Request

Thank you for filling out the Biographic Data sheet. Now I would like to make an even greater request of you. While your biographic information will be very helpful, I would like to know more about you, particularly why you became interested in politics.

If you will allow me to interview you, please answer the following questions, and mail this along with the Data sheet.

1. Name _____

2. Home address _____

_____

3. Home phone _____

   Office phone _____

4. Please indicate the days and times most convenient to you for an interview.

_____

_____

_____

This interview should last no more than twenty minutes. If you should wish to contact me, my home phone is 356-0986, and my office phone is 333-2781. Thank you again for your time and trouble.

Yours,

Alan Pearson

Personal Interview Questions

1) What is your party office?

2) Why did you get active in politics?

3) What factors maintain your interest and participation in politics?

4) What are some of the issues which concern you?

5) Which public policy questions are more important to you--local (including state) or national-international?

6) Do you think that policy questions should be brought out into the open and settle d openly?

7) How do you recruit rank and file members, and who are they?

8) Why do you think they become active?

9) Why do you think they stay active?

10) Which policy questions (or issues in campaigns) is your organization concerned with, and how do you decide upon them?

11) How do you and your organization determine which candidates to endorse and support?

12) What is your opinion of patronage?

13) Describe your organization.

14) How do you view the campaigns (issue oriented, candidate oriented, or both)?

15) What is the rank and file reaction to losses?

16) What satisfactions or rewards (tangible and/or intangible) do you feel you gain from your political activities?

17) How did you get your present office?

18) How are your potential leaders promoted within your organization?

19) How do you distinguish yourself from the "professional politician?"

20) What do you do to keep the organization and the rank-and-file active and interested when there is no campaign in progress?

21) What are the goals of your organization?

22) How do you expect to fulfill them?

23) Do you have anything to add?

FOOTNOTES

[1]The following, by necessity is a very brief summary of Wilson's description. The reader is urged to read Wilson's complete account in: James Q. Wilson, The Amateur Democrat (Chicago, 1966), Chapter 1.

[2]Ibid., pp. 3-4.

[3]This terminology is based on a discussion by Robert K. Merton in his Social Theory and Social Structure (rev. ed.: Glenco: Free Press, 1957), pp. 387-420.

[4]Wilson Op. cit., pp. 10-11.